

BLAME IT ON THE BOSSA NOVA

The kitchen sink was stopped up again. Clete had the plunger out, pushing and pulling, the exertion raising a sweat slick on his bald head underneath the combed-over hair.

"Damn it, Juanita. What'd you put in this sink? It's stopped up tighter'n my bowels the last time I ate one of your cheese enchiladas," he said, giving the plunger another shove.

Juanita ignored him. She was out in the family room putting on her new cassette, The Escondido Clarinet Quartet Plays Cole Porter. She was gonna Bossa Nova.

Ginger, Juanita's Chihuahua, laid under the coffee table looking embarrassed. She'd seen Juanita shake it before.

Juanita pushed the play button. Anything Goes, the old Frank Sinatra standard, came wailing out of the speakers. She pulled off her bifocals and let them dangle by the neck cord onto her ample bosom. She shook her flabby hips then got the tree trunk thighs going.

The tea cups, hanging by hooks in the cupboards, started rattling.

The dirty water in the stopped-up sink started sloshing around.

Clete took one look over the kitchen counter and forgot all about the recalcitrant piece of food stuck somewhere down in the plastic pipes beneath his sink. There isn't a man alive who wouldn't be stirred by the sight of Juanita breaking into a Bossa Nova. He duck-walked out to the family room to join her.

Ginger put her paws over her eyes. The clarinets wailed.

Then, unexpectedly, Dave, Clete's cat walked out in front of Ginger. Ginger charged.

Dave hissed, spat, and took off running. He went right under Juanita's foot. But Ginger wouldn't make it. Juanita was going to step on her beloved Chihuahua. At the last minute Juanita saw what was happening and over-extended, stepping beyond where Ginger was and twisting her ankle. She went down.

Clete, crazy, chivalrous fool that her was, tried to break her fall. He broke three ribs and dislocated his shoulder. As he laid there under his wife's suffocating bulk, he

thought he heard the clarinets playing I've Got You Under My Skin, but he was in pain, he couldn't be sure.

Dave and Ginger looked out from their hiding place behind the recliner. They figured it'd be best if they laid low for a couple of days.

NADINE AND RUSTY DROP BY TO CHIT-CHAT

Nadine dropped by Ruth's house for coffee, her little hyperactive dachshund, Rusty, in tow.

Ellis, Ruth's husband, turned off the T.V. and headed back to the bedroom to take a shower, not wanting to listen to the ladies talk drapes, daytime soaps, and new diets. Rusty sniffed his ankle as he walked by the dining room table. Ellis kicked at him. Rusty skittered away.

Ruth said, "ELLIS."

Nadine said, "Come over here, Rusty-Poo, and sit down by Mama," patting the leg of the chair.

Ruth poured the coffee while Nadine got up to let Rusty out the sliding glass door to 'do his little job.' He did it, kicked back some grass, and sniffed the air. He caught a wiff of Ginger, the tiny, spindly-legged, perpetually-shivering Chihuahua that lived next door, out to 'do her little job' too,

Rusty pawed the fence and howled.

Ginger pranced around and whimpered, waving her butt in his direction.

"RUSTY, RUSTY, GET IN HERE, GOD DAMN IT," yelled Nadine. Next door, Juanita stepped out onto the patio and put her hands on her hips, disgusted at what she was seeing. "GET AWAY FROM THAT FENCE, GINGER, YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A WHORE."

Rusty came reluctantly back to the house, his wet, pink protuberance dragging the ground.

Ginger hung her head and made her way across the lawn, looking wistfully back over her shoulder. Juanita shoo-ed her inside, saying, "You bad girl."

Rusty sat by Nadine's legs, shamefaced. Then he got up and paced the floor. He decided to go exploring down